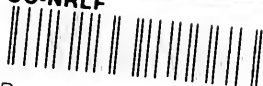


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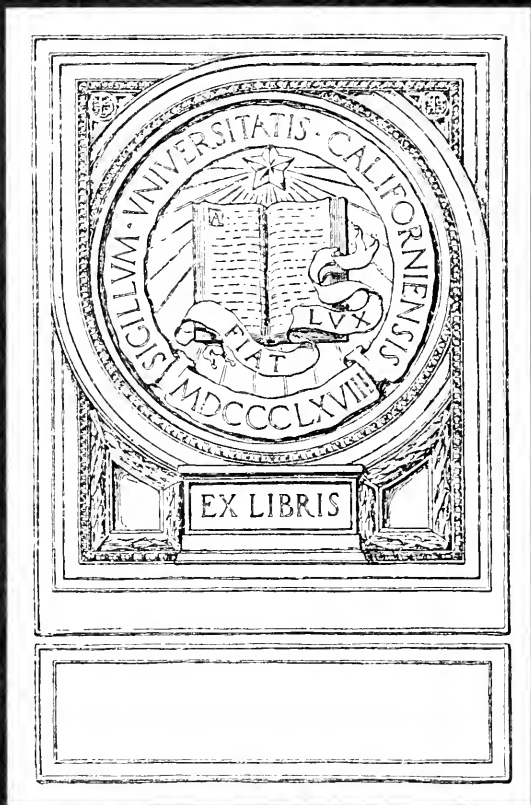
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# OUR OUTLOOK AS CHANGED BY THE WAR

BY

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## OUR OUTLOOK AS CHANGED BY THE WAR.

IT cannot be a dubious statement that no one of us who has returned to work for this academic year is in a frame of mind resembling that in which she went down for the vacation. Things have happened which have brought us great changes: changes of a kind beyond our control, though not such as reflection and effort may not in some way modify for the general good. Not only have we all been suffering: we have been and are encountering dangers; some of us, it may be, are receiving unexpected opportunities. All of us are forced to face the past, present and future under new lights, and with newly realized possibilities. As intelligent beings, we feel bound to know whither this all tends, that we may both be prepared for what may come and may not lose hold on what we value in the present. But that we should understand our position intelligently is hardly to be expected. In crossing a stream amid shoals and currents, one cannot accurately mark the course of one's motion. But we are, I think, likely to be more serviceable to others and more confident in our own minds, if we try to analyze the change that has come upon us—though it has not yet had its full effect on our lives and minds.

The first element in the change—one under which most others might be comprehended—is a general unsettling and resettling of our sense of proportion. Things that seemed important to us a couple of months ago now count for nothing at all, and vice versa. To a certain extent this is undoubtedly good, especially as it has led us to put in the background those personal

preferences and idiosyncrasies which are wont to loom large. Many people to whom it would have seemed a great hardship to curtail a summer holiday or to go without a new winter gown would now regard such small deprivations as coming in the day's work—unworthy of the name of sacrifice. Interest in larger things has tended to make all but very small-minded people less sensitive to imagined personal affronts—less regretful for the loss of small pleasures. Apart from the causes at stake, we have had—in the exposure to danger and death of our near kinsfolk and friends—a sharp reminder of the transitoriness of life and of our dependence, for health and efficiency, on conditions which defy calculation. We have been, as it has been said, startled into the sense of great realities. But however wholesome this may be, we do well to beware of exaggeration. We may pause and ask ourselves whether the things that seem now most *real* to us deserve that title more than some of the things that we placed highest in quiet times. It may be well to remember our mortality, though, after all, the feeling of watchers at a distance is different from that of soldiers in the field, who become indifferent to the approach of death. But even granted that the facts of warfare have brought death and disaster within the limits of common probabilities, it might still be expedient, as some philosophers have held, to avoid mental occupation with such subjects. Yet the seriousness of life, however brought home, it is well for us to discern.

This is in great measure because to many of us the great change has meant the loss of a false security—the destruction of a fool's paradise. We had all been hearing a good deal lately about the growth of tendencies which were bound to bring all wars to an end. War has been stamped as contrary to the spirit of progress, which has of late been making us all more and more cosmopolitan. The culture and industry, the religious and social move-

ments which are dominant in widely separated regions,—the delicate financial system by which no material distress can be confined to one area alone, but must spread like ripples from a centre—these have brought us to the alternative: either there can be no more a great international war, or if there is such a war, it will surpass in the misery and destruction it causes anything that the mind of man can at present conceive. Almost every one would have thought the former alternative the more probable, but the second has come upon us. There is, as any but a blind optimist must acknowledge, no mechanical and automatic force of social progress.\* We had no right to believe in such, and ought not to be consternated now that it is gone. History shows us none, nor is it countenanced by our religion. It is not the first time in the world's history that universal peace seemed to be at hand, but fled away to give place to darkness and tumult. Peace after bitter struggles seemed assured under the aegis of the Roman Empire—in the days when the Temple of Janus was closed, and when pious shepherd folk heard the message from Heaven “in terra pax.” The Roman Government had a mighty task, and to a great extent it achieved it, in the only way in which peace over a wide area and loyalty to a central power can be maintained, by a prudent—sometimes even a generous—regard for local liberties and diversities. But the Empire made mistakes, and by these rather than purely by moral delinquencies, it lost its power to maintain peace and order, or to regain its prestige over the encroaching tribes that still revered its name. Amid the multitudinous conflicts of the Middle Ages, which ecclesiastical and secular authority were powerless to prevent, and the yet more destructive struggles of modern times, if war has always been denounced as evil, it has yet been regarded as a necessary evil. In the resettle-

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\* This thought was well developed in Dean Inge's sermon in St. Paul's, Oct. 18th.

ment after the suppression of Napoleon, there were in some quarters hopes of a peace to be maintained on Christian principles by the joint action of the leading powers, or rather of the monarchs at their head. But the rulers failed to discern the signs of the times, and the Holy Alliance became a by-word for interested hypocrisy. Later, many began to hope that the enlightened self-interest of the peoples would accomplish what neither the principles nor the state-craft of governments had been able to obtain. It is curious to read now the high hopes expressed at the time of the first Great Exhibition—of 1850—when it seemed to many as if national rivalries for the future would be gratified in innocent industrial competitions. That was only three years before the Crimean War, and the first Great Exhibition of Paris was held on the eve of the terrible Franco-German War of 1870. It became evident that intimate industrial relations, common interests in science, art, and literature, and even the growth of humanitarian principles in morals and religion availed no more to keep the states of Europe in mutual harmony and good-will, than did the Olympic Games and the common treasure of Hellenic culture lead to any permanent establishment of peace among the ancient Greeks. Nevertheless there was the hope that democracy and enlightenment would lead to the recognition, at least of the costliness and consequent futility of war. But we know now that Demos may be led captive by a military caste or by a national panic. Purely dynastic conflicts seem to be out of date, but the influence of powerful persons is hardly less great now than ever. The appeal to self-interest and the demonstration of the loss entailed even to the victorious party in any war, were urged with force by Mr. Norman Angel and his followers. Their practical error seems to lie in the fact, that both rulers and people acting in masses, may fall below as they may rise above considerations of pecuniary gain. Scorn was thrown by Mr. Norman Angel



on the very idea that Germans might conceivably, if they occupied London, loot the Bank of England. Does anyone now doubt whether they would hesitate to do so if ever they had the chance, even if they might lose thereby as much as the English?

We have had a rude awakening if we were sleeping in the hope of a Utopia based on the recognition of the common interests of all civilized peoples. But after all, the cause of peace, being identical with the cause of righteousness, rests on a nobler foundation. The Stoic principle that "we were made for one another"—that the kosmos is as a living body compact of mutually dependent members;—the Hebrew assertion that "The Earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof"; and the Christian conception of all men as children of the Father that is in Heaven, remain and are potent. But for ages they may seem to run counter to the spirit and tendency of society.

The change in our general mental perspective, with the collapse of our over-great security for the future, has been the more painful and intense because it has laid bare the elemental nature of man on the animal and anti-social side. This has been a specially bitter revelation to those of us who have realised most strongly our moral and mental debt to the nation which now stands convicted of having sanctioned something like a lapse into barbarism aggravated by adhesion to the most modern scientific measures and efficient organisation. There has been a good deal of loose talk about "brute force" and "modern Huns." By a curious confusion of comparisons, we read descriptions of "the hordes of Attila with their heavy artillery" and the "barbarism" of most elaborately organised tactics. We have not always realised that the primitive element in man is not in

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\* The expression is, of course, due to the Kaiser himself, in his instructions to the army in China. But he was hardly speaking as a historian.

itself so dangerous or terrible as long as man remains in a primitive state. It is where it is deliberately fostered and allowed the scope which civilised and humane institutions have continually curtailed, that we have something far worse than the brutal element in man—what we may fairly call the diabolical. If we are surprised at this—as we most of us are—it is due, probably, to the survival in us of the one fallacy of Greek ethics (though not unqualified even there) by which virtue was identified with knowledge, or the kindred modern fallacy that systematic education is sure to eradicate vice. I have said that those of us who love and believe in German culture feel sadder than those who do not, and appreciate more fully the bitter irony with which our enemies claim to be fighting for culture's sake. But perhaps there is at the bottom of the heart of some of us a lurking fear lest we with similar training and in similar circumstances might possibly prove capable of some of the ghastly deeds which we abhor in them. The thought brings humiliation and urges caution—"let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall"—but there is in it something of consolation. These elemental passions—this original sin, if we like to call it so—may be, and has been, held in abeyance so as to become weakened and unlikely to explode except under great provocation. And again, with the very worst of human feelings and springs of action, war brings to light unexpected traits of generosity, self-sacrifice, devotion to ideals, even in commonplace persons. It is inspiring, if we must view human nature at its worst, to turn and behold it at its best.

But perhaps the change in our outlook comes home to most of us chiefly in a directly practical way. All the conditions of life are so changed, all the future so uncertain, that we hardly know what to be about. It is impossible to look far ahead in making plans, either for

ourselves or other people, without leaving a wide margin for eventualities. Our ultimate ideals may remain as before—but the subordinate ones, and the means we must take to reach them, are often different.

In practical life we have to follow two alternative courses: to carry on “business as usual,” and to be always ready to adapt ourselves to changing conditions. The former maxim is excellent as far as it goes, as it implies the obligation to keep one’s head cool and to be ready to resume normal life when normal conditions return. There was something heroic in the conduct of the Liège students who went on quietly with their examination papers during the bombardment of the town, and when they had finished their answers went out to fight. But there are necessary limits to this kind of heroism. Thus the need of economy prescribes many restrictions and additional tasks for most of us, though we are bound to economize reasonably, and with a view to avoiding more dislocation of labour than is necessary. There is something of the nature of bravado in pursuing recreations with a sick heart, or in labouring to produce something for which there is now no demand. But a good many people need to be warned against acting on sudden and generous impulse without calm deliberation on future probabilities. In this connection I may remark how satisfactory it is to find that here, in our college, so few women students or their parents have thought it necessary to cut short an academic career for the sake either of saving money or of gratifying a desire for immediate usefulness. For those who are not suffering from pecuniary pressure, learning and mental discipline are good things to be pursued and valued for their own sake, whatever may be in store. For those who know the future to be full of risk, university education is, if we take the lowest ground, a safeguard against helpless unemployment. Meantime, in our various pursuits, we have to consider both the

intrinsic value of the objects in view, and the expediency of devoting more or less time and attention to them at the present moment.

Here I may say, though I fear that some may not agree with me, that though strongly desirous of both the political franchise and of the opening up of further opportunities in public life for women, I should heartily desire that till the crisis is over, all efforts to these ends should be discontinued. It is not only that patriotism bids us all present a united front to the foe, leaving all party or sectional questions to be solved in quieter times, but also that war time is distinctly not a time for pressing the claims of women to share in the privileges as in the labours of men. Of course no reasonable person of either sex would disparage the splendid work now being done by women in nursing, in organising relief, and in trying to keep the work of the world on its usual lines until life as usual can recommence. But if we rate the amount of women's work, and its quality likewise, as high as possible, the fact remains that we are not all wanted in order to do what is required, that a great many of us are, for public purposes, superfluous. Briefly :—many of us are generally trying to extend that part of life in which men and women share alike. War time tends to the differentiation of functions between the sexes. Amid the clash of arms we receive protection and much consideration. For liberty and progress we must wait till quieter times.

Meantime in the sphere common to men and women and open to us without question, there may be opportunities for our best efforts. To take one local illustration: in the absence of so many young men from the University, some lectures are attended and some examinations will be taken by women students only. It would be a pleasant thing, and one helpful to our cause, if in days to come, it were recorded that in this critical year our Women's Colleges had proved equal to

the burden laid on them, and that the standard attained had been at least as high as in ordinary times. This, however, is a minor consideration, only to be entertained because typical of a good deal more.

Generally speaking, our life in war time should be strenuous but not abnormal. We have to resist the temptation to distract our energies on multifarious auxiliary occupations which may or may not be serviceable, and to reserve our main strength for the kinds of work that our abilities or training enables us to do best. But whatever we do now, we cannot and we need not avoid the great question as to what may lie before us in the not very remote future. We all of us form a part—if an extremely small part of public opinion, and the more enlightened public opinion becomes, the fewer blunders are likely to be made when we come to the final settlement.

I fear that even if things go as well as we can dare to hope, and if, within a few years, the spirit of aggressive militarism—from the German side at least—is subdued, we may still be far from the goal of universal peace. I have already referred to the disappointed dreams of our forefathers as to that consummation. It will be something to strive for with all our might, but probably not by such means as are already being advocated—general disarmament and the end of secret diplomacy. The latter seems almost inseparable from a system of independent states, and the retention of military force for defensive purposes may prove the best preventive of aggression. Certainly those advocates of peace who, till the last moment, disparaged our danger and the necessity for precautionary measures are not those to whom we should naturally go for counsel just now. I do not want to decide whether the obligation of national defence should be legal or moral. Personally I should much prefer that it should be purely moral, though I see nothing contrary to national freedom in the compulsory training of youths.

As to the action of such training in fostering a military spirit, the opposite has, I think, been proved by the experience of some of the continental peoples and is strongly asserted by the leaders of labour in France and Switzerland.\* If all the countries of the civilized world were to form a kind of federal union—a remote supposition at present—we should require means to coerce any member that declined to submit to the judgment of the international tribunal. We should not need huge armaments, with the costliest equipment, such as are bound to lead to destructive wars. But we should probably need national defensive forces for some time, and we shall always need some forces to keep the society of the future in peace and security.

How that society will be organised we cannot in the least foretell. Similar political institutions everywhere we should hardly wish to see, and we certainly shall not see. International co-operation in social reforms we may hope to see. But it is to be feared that for some years, international intercourse of a friendly and helpful kind, except among states that have been allied or neutral in the great conflict, will not be easy. And there will be the further difficulty of having to cope with the ambitions and the aspirations of at least one great state that has hitherto been regarded as representing a more backward stage than the countries of Western Europe. Russia, according to some experts, is likely to gain morally more than any other state by the war. Her governors have seen the necessity of conciliating disaffected peoples and churches, and have made great sacrifices to put down the national vice of drunkenness. But Russia, if she advances to freedom, will not, probably, model her whole system on western ideas. And her culture, however much we may admire the minds of her greatest writers, is undoubtedly more alien to us than that of the great

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\* See G. G. Coulton: *Workers and War*.

people from whom we have been so suddenly and so bitterly estranged.

This brings us to the consideration of a great danger—moral and intellectual—we are already beginning to feel,—of an unreasonable disparagement of our mental and spiritual debt to the Germans. None of those present is old enough to remember the illuminating and vivifying influence of German ideas, when they were first introduced to us by Carlyle and the great galaxy of Victorian writers. During the last few months, English people have felt suspicious of German thought, believing that it has uttered its last word in the anti-moral politics of Bernhardi, and in the curiously unactual document addressed by German theologians to “all evangelical Christians.” Yet these two expressions of opinion, by the way, have nothing in common but a determined hatred of England. All Germans do not think and feel alike, and, after all, there are a good many utterances of English popular philosophy which it would not be fair to take as expressing the best mind of England. Bernhardi represents the German Chancellor’s policy. He has none of the depth and zeal for truth which marks the genuine German thinker. I am inclined to think that his admiration of power pure and simple as the determinant force in history, and the mark of every historical character, has had exponents among various historians in our own country. It may be due to reaction against a Rousseau-ish flabbiness which errs almost as much on the other side. But leaving Bernhardi apart—leaving aside also certain rather pedantic tendencies in some branches of German scholarship, let us honour and emulate the patience and thoroughness which mark the sound scholarship of the German universities, and still more the boldness of thought that has opened up for us new lines in religion and philosophy. It is almost ludicrously unfair to take the religion of the Kaiser as the last word of German Protestantism. The

influence of the Kaiser, as is well known, has *not* been favourable to what is called the Higher Criticism. I should not imagine that the Protestant churches in Germany are as vigorous and efficient as they might be, but this is not the fault of the sound studies which are prosecuted under their protection. And if religion in Germany has not been able to resist the prevalent forces of secularism, of over-clericalism and anti-clericalism and of conflicting interests, it yet has had and still has many representatives who possess deep religious convictions and a large fund of Christian charity. Perhaps we may hope that in the future, the purely religious element in these churches may prevail over the secular and political.

This brings us to what is the most interesting part of our whole subject, but one about which we can only speak in a fragmentary and guarded way: how is the religious outlook of Europe affected by the war, and what will be or ought to be the results of the subsequent settlement with respect to churches and religious beliefs? Of course we cannot expect to see the same kind of result everywhere, since parties, religious and anti-religious, have been opposing one another or competing under very different conditions in different countries. On the whole I am inclined to think that there is good ground for hope, though there are many dangers ahead. It is well known that a time of war, in the stirring effect it must needs have on men's deepest feelings, is often accompanied or followed by a strong movement towards religion. One remembers the concluding verse of Clough's delightful summary of the conditions favourable to faith or to negation:

"Almost everyone when age,  
Disease or sorrow strike him  
Inclines to think there is a God,  
Or something very like Him."

This applies equally to individual and to public diseases and sorrows. At the same time it is in days



of stress and excitement that emotion runs away with judgment, that religion is apt to be associated with mental crudity, and piety to become merged in fanaticism. Doubtless a religion with superstitious admixtures is far better than either religious indifference or blank secularism. But a religion associated with soundness of mind is greatly to be preferred, and is the only religion possible for persons of trained intellect,—except, of course, in the abnormal though not infrequent cases in which people keep their religion in some air-tight compartment, having no communication with their general ways of thinking and living.

I suppose that those who have travelled on the continent have been impressed by the alienation—generally speaking—of the intellectual classes from the churches to which they would naturally seem to belong. The decline may be rather in institutional than in personal religion, but the former is, under most circumstances, desired if not required by the latter, and certainly the latter often seems to be in abeyance. The reasons are not always far to seek. Religious institutions and beliefs have come to be associated with rejected systems of government and of thought. The ministers of religion have been disliked as political partisans, or despised as hostile to social and intellectual progress. In England, we have happily escaped an identification of Christianity with retrogression and obscurantism, though such an identification is often asserted and—if the influence of some well-meaning persons became stronger—would come to be more generally held. In France, the Church, as an institution, has been severely punished for the intolerance and worldliness she showed in the days of her power. Yet history seems to show that the French are essentially a religious people—they certainly have produced some of the finest types of religious character, and the most striking monuments of religious thought and art with which Christendom has been enriched. It has

always seemed to me rather by unhappy accident than by natural development that the French people have—generally speaking—become almost religiously opposed to religion altogether. But of late there have been many signs of a revival of religious feeling, and an appreciation of Christian ideas that may lead to good results. If it is ever possible that the Church should cease to repel those who strive to unite the causes of Christianity and of progress, other nations besides France will be gainers. And even if this can never happen, we may at least hope for more mutual respect and forbearance between the leaders of religion and of culture, which may put an end to intolerance in the state and to perpetual grievances in the Church.

In this respect, France is typical of many nations. If the war is ended as we trust it will be, the Power to suffer most morally will, of course, be Germany. She will have to see her idols broken and to submit to a new discipline, more severe than that of imperial militarism. If she is able to abide the ordeal, she will indeed become “sadder and wiser.”

Among ourselves, the strong feelings aroused have in some quarters helped to fill breaches, and to draw together men and women who have much in common as to religious feelings and principles, but are generally held apart by differences of church organisation, and by some divergences as to interpretation of religious authority. Most unfortunately, the tendency to insist on these points of difference threatens in some quarters any efforts towards reunion. But in religion, as in politics, a crisis like the present makes any sectional or party spirit appear not only mischievous but despicable. Let us labour that any ground here gained may never be lost.

I have spoken generally as if we were all hopeful as to the final result of the war. We have, I think, a right to be so—though much patience may be needed before we see our hopes realized. But suppose, after all, that things

went what we consider the wrong way, and that by the use of unscrupulous force our enemies were able to destroy all our national life and our sources of happiness and efficiency? That would indeed be a sore trial of our faith -- but not worse than that to which our predecessors were subjected at the beginning of what we call the Dark Ages. Yet they, or the true-hearted among them, did not entirely despair. They were buoyed up by a hope which we can no longer share, that when the darkest day had come, a sure judgment would follow, and a new heaven and a new earth be established that should remain for ever.

But if such supposition is alien to our present modes of thought, we are still able to hold to some kind of "other-worldliness," and to acknowledge that visible success or failure—whether to an individual, a nation, a society, or a world—is not the one measure of good and evil. We are bound to labour, fight, and pray for the good of our country and of mankind. But if our struggles seem ineffectual, it by no means follows that they have not helped towards the attainment of a goal which lies far beyond our ken. For the cause of truth and righteousness *is* always triumphant, and does not await the issue of events for its final crown. Such issue is for us as sign and symbol—a partial manifestation of the Eternal Good, which we are taught to recognise both in sufferings for righteousness' sake and in the joyful accomplishment of a divine creative work. We may hope to behold such a manifestation as the issue of our present troubles. But if we do not, we are still bound to go on in courage and faith, and so shall we be prepared to play our part in the great drama, of which the end is apparent to no mortal eye.

24th Oct., 1914.

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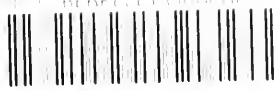


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